

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Meeting Date: November 17, 2004

Division: County Administrator

Bulk Item: Yes X No

Department: Veterans Affairs

AGENDA ITEM WORDING: Approval to hire Veterans Service Counselor in Key West office and approval to fund from General Fund contingency fund.

ITEM BACKGROUND: In 2003, the Department did not fill a vacancy due to an Administrator Veterans Service resignation and have attempted to cover the work load at a reduced staff level. An additional position is requested to handle the increased work load. The Veterans Service Counselor position is a lower level position (Grade 8) than was closed in 2003 (Grade 10).

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOCC ACTION:

CONTRACT/AGREEMENT CHANGES: N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Approval

TOTAL COST: Salary \$33,496 + benefits

BUDGETED: Yes No X

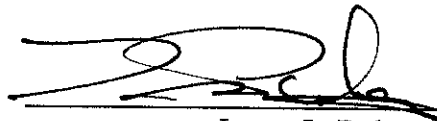
COST TO COUNTY: \$33,496 + benefits

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Ad Valorem

REVENUE PRODUCING: Yes No X **AMOUNT PER MONTH** **Year**

APPROVED BY: County Atty OMB/Purchasing X Risk Management

DIVISION DIRECTOR APPROVAL:


James L. Roberts

DOCUMENTATION: Included X To Follow Not Required

DISPOSITION:

AGENDA ITEM # F13

2005 Veterans Counselor Position – Urgent Plea

To: The Board of County Commission

From: Charles L. Ingraham, Veterans Affairs Director

In 2003, the Veterans Affairs Department had one additional position (see Position Detail), an Administrator Veterans Services, VAVA007, @ \$44,156.00 (not stacked). The position was held by Sally M. Ferland. Mrs. Ferland was working out of the Marathon Office. Upon her resignation, in an effort to save the County money, I elected to transfer James Timony to that position. His position in Key West was not filled.

I have tried since then to handle the work load of this department, namely the Key West office with the remaining staff. This has proven to be nearly impossible and overwhelming. The work load for this type of department does not decrease, but rather increases, especially with the many changes inspired by the Federal Government and current military operations internationally.

With the recently implemented Benefits Before Delivery Program we are seeing an easy increase of about 20% in recently discharged veterans and/or retirees initiating disability claims with our department.

We are experiencing a steady increase on daily walk-in's assisting homeless and indigent veterans due to the warm client and abundant services available to the these veterans. Of course, the departure of the Veterans Homeless Outreach Coordinator is also presenting our department with an influx of homeless and indigent veterans.

Historically, one member of this department would conduct Field Visits and Homeless Outreach. Now, that I am the only Counselor in the office, that invaluable service has all but been suspended. It is virtually impossible for the severely disabled veterans to come into the office to seek assistance. Those that are mentally or physically impaired would be seen in their home. The homeless and indigent are no longer visited in their environments. The only contact or visitation these veterans would receive would be by our office. These Field Visits and Homeless Outreach services are no longer rendered.

In the winter months, the "snowbirds" come to live in the Keys. Among those Snowbirds are retirees, and veterans that seek our office out for assistance. They are clients that have either been assisted by us for years or they have been told about our department and seek out our assistance. From year to year we see about a 15 to 20% increase in those clients.

Walk-in and telephone clients continue to be a large client base. Most of these clients are gathering information BEFORE filing a claim, but some also are needing other veterans services such as information on home loans, GI Bill/Education information, health care benefits, death benefits, and research of

their service records and service medical records. Since we can no longer provide outreach services, the number of walk-in's are steadily increasing. Now with the access to the internet we are also providing assistance via email. Mainly, at this time, we are providing basic information as listed above.

Millennium Emergency Health Care Act: This is a program assists all qualifying veterans in payment of their Emergency Health Care invoices for emergency medical treatment they received. As word of this benefit spread in the last two years, we have seen an influx of veterans applying for this benefit. The Key West Office assists 3-5 veterans a week in the time consuming task of gathering all medical records, proper medical invoices, and itemized billing for each health care provider for each veteran. The claims once compiled are sent via Key West VA Shuttle to the Miami VA Hospital for processing. Once the VA receives the claim, our department serves as a Liaison between the Veteran and the VA in getting these claims paid.

Since January 2004, solely, I have seen 122 new clients, this does not include the clients that have not been put into the database nor does it include our "regulars". We have an average of 8 to 10 regulars visit our Key West office daily. This does not include the regular Van riders that come to schedule their seat on the van. That program is another creature in of itself. This year alone I can safely estimate a 30% to 40% increase in case load for the Key West Office.

The new Counselor would also serve as our "Floating Counselor". The Counselor would be available to fill-in in the Marathon and Plantation Key offices, should their be a temporary absence caused by a conference, vacation or minor illness.

The new Counselor position we are requesting, is merely to fill the void caused by the resignation of the Veterans Affairs Administrator in 2003, at a much lower pay. For the last two years, this department has been critically understaffed because of our attempt to cut back the budgetary costs. However, it is more than evident that we cannot continue to provide unparalleled service to the veterans of our County without the return of one Counselor position which was removed in 2003.

4/10/03

MONROE COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
POSITION DETAIL WORKSHEET
by Fund, Cost Center

Date: 3/4/2003

Pos. No.	Title		Grade	Status	FTE	Direct Salary	FICA	Retirement	Group Ins.	Work. Comp.	Total
Fund 001		GENERAL FUND									
Cost Center: 67001		VETERAN AFFAIRS GENERAL									
VAVA001	DIRECTOR VETERANS AFFAIRS	INGRAHAM	012	Existing	1.00	56,551	4,326	6,294	12,000	6,862	86,033
VAVA002	SR ADMINISTRATOR VETERANS AF	TIMONY	011	Existing	1.00	48,068	3,677	5,349	12,000	259	69,353
VAVA003	ADMINISTRATOR VETERANS SERVI	DEEDS	010	Existing	1.00	42,966	3,286	4,782	12,000	232	63,266
VAVA007	ADMINISTRATOR VETERANS SERVI	FERLAND	010	Existing	1.00	44,156	3,377	4,914	12,000	238	64,685
VAVA005	SR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	SMITH	008	Existing	1.00	35,640	2,726	3,966	12,000	192	54,524
VAVA006	VETERANS SERVICE COUNSELOR	JOHNSON	008	Existing	1.00	37,302	2,853	4,151	12,000	201	56,507
VAVA008	VETERANS SERVICE COUNSELOR	MICHAL	008	Existing	1.00	35,640	2,726	3,966	12,000	192	54,524
Merit	MERIT			Proposed	0.00	7,208	551	802	0	874	9,435
TOTAL For Cost Center 67001					7.00	307,531	23,522	34,224	84,000	9,050	458,327